

## FLETCHER DESCRIBES TAKING OF VERA CRUZ

Rear-Admiral's Own Story of Occupation of Vera Cruz Is Told in Detailed Report.

### BLOODY FIGHTING TAKES PLACE

American Officers, Marines and Blue-Jackets Commanded by Swift Descent on Mexican City.

Washington, June 6.—Rear-Admiral Fletcher's own story of the occupation of Vera Cruz is told in the first detailed report of the navy's operations on the East coast of Mexico, made public today by the Navy Department. The report tells of Admiral Fletcher's receipt of the historic cablegram early in the morning of April 21, ordering him to seize the Vera Cruz custom-house, of the swift descent of marines and blue-jackets from the American warships upon the port, and the bloody fighting that occurred when they met with resistance from the Mexican Federal soldiers and irregulars.

The admiral refers particularly to the work of the cruisers, Prairie, Chester and San Francisco, which, moored inside the breakwaters, covered successive landings of marines and blue-jackets.

"Initiated and clear judgment was required on the part of the commanding officers," says the report. "The fleet showed in a striking manner the efficiency of the fleet as a fighting command." The three vessels were under charge of Commanders Moffett, Stickney and Harrison.

"When the cablegram of 8 A. M., April 21, to seize the custom-house was received, the following officers were in my cabin:

"Captain W. R. Rush, U. S. Navy, commanding naval brigade; Captain H. M. P. Huse, U. S. Navy, chief of staff; Commander H. O. Stickney, U. S. Navy, commanding Prairie; Commander H. O. Stickney, U. S. Navy, commanding Chester; and Lieutenant Colonel W. C. Neville, U. S. M. C., commanding marines.

### INFORMED OF SITUATION

"They had been called on board to be informed of the situation and to assure me that the plans previously prepared for the employment of the naval forces against Vera Cruz were understood by them, and that they were prepared to carry them out. The method of procedure adopted was to land marines from the Prairie, Florida and Utah, and the second battalion from the Florida, seize the custom-house, railway terminal and cable office. The seaman battalion of the Utah was held on board, awaiting news of the Ypiranga.

"Commander Stickney and Lieutenant Colonel Neville returned to the Prairie, and at 9 A. M. Commander Stickney went ashore and personally notified the American consul that we would land to take charge of the custom-house, directed him to notify all foreign consuls, and to send all foreigners aboard the Vera Cruz, which was at Pier No. 4, and the Ypiranga, then moored in the harbor.

"General Mass, the Mexican military commander, notified by telephone from the consulate that he would be on the spot at once to take charge of the custom-house, and he was urged to offer no resistance, but to withdraw in order to avoid useless loss of life and property of the people of Vera Cruz.

"At 9:40 A. M. an officer from the Prairie boarded the foreign mail-boat in the harbor, Carlos V. (Spanish) and Essex (British), and notified them of our intended action.

"An officer from the Prairie visited the 21st of San Juan d'Ulloa, informed the commander of the fort that we would seize the custom-house, and that any aggressive move on his part would be immediately followed by our opening heavy guns on the fort. The commander of the fort said that he understood the situation, but if we opened fire, he would return it. He had an armed guard of 150 regular troops who had charge of the prisoners.

"The Ward Line steamer, with four foreign consuls, and a number of other consuls, pulled away from Pier No. 4, and anchored in the outer harbor. Commander Cone, of the Utah, came on board. The vessel at 9:40 A. M. came on board. Commander Cone reported that the landing force ready and waiting for any service and returned to his ship.

**CAPTAIN IS DIRECTED.**

"At 10:30 A. M. the Prairie reported, 'Am ready,' and I directed Captain Rush to land his brigade and carry out the orders. The following signal was sent to the Prairie at 10:30 A. M.: 'Land and take Pier No. 4, be prepared to cover landing by necessary gun fire.' At 11:45 A. M. the Prairie signalled, 'Extraction has been effected.' The landing force of the Florida moved off at the same time, and were joined by the Panama contingent of marines from the Utah. This made a total force of 357 officers and men, of whom 200 were marines, all under the command of Captain William R. Rush, United States Navy, captain of the Florida.

"At 11:50 A. M. the Prairie signalled, 'Extraction has been effected.' The landing force of the Florida moved off at the same time, and were joined by the Panama contingent of marines from the Utah. This made a total force of 357 officers and men, of whom 200 were marines, all under the command of Captain William R. Rush, United States Navy, captain of the Florida.

"At 12:05 P. M. Rush reported his first casualties.

"Immediately on landing, the marine regiment under Lieutenant Colonel Neville advanced up Calle de Montesinos, seizing cable office and detaching one company to seize the power plant north of the Terminal Station, and to cover approaches from the west along the railroad tracks. The head of the marine column had advanced to Avenida Bravo when at 11:57 A. M. they were fired into from all directions. The marines' Colt automatic guns went into action at independence, Cinco de Mayo, Cortes, Hidalgo and Bravo, and cleared these streets immediately. The men took positions in front of warehouses, lining the north side of the Terminal, and fired at the enemy who had occupied the house-tops, windows and towers on the opposite side of the street. The marine regiment was then ordered not to advance, but to hold original position.

**CUSTOM-HOUSE SEIZED**

**BY SEAMAN BATTALION**

"In the meantime the Florida seaman battalion under Lieutenant Wainwright had advanced and seized the custom-house and custom-house post-office and railroad terminal. They were under steady fire from the enemy in houses on Banito Juarez and Morelos Streets, which was returned. The artillery section of the Florida went into action in front of the American consulate and shelled the enemy out

of the old lighthouse tower on Benito Juarez Street. When the first report of casualties was received the Solace was ordered from Tampico to Vera Cruz by radio.

"At 1 P. M. I repaired aboard the Prairie with Captain Huse and Lieutenant Courts, and from this point directed joint operations ashore and afloat. The Prairie opened fire at 1:10 P. M. with three-inch gun on the enemy's mounted troops in the sandhills beyond the city. Indirect fire was used, with a church tower as a point of aim, range 2,500 to 3,000 yards. The second shot fell among their troops and drove them beyond the sandhills.

"Sharpshooters in the Naval School Building and the new market had been firing steadily on Pier No. 4, where all of our boats were landing. Chief Boat-swall McElroy, in charge of three picket launches armed with one-pounder guns, put out from Pier No. 4 and steamed full speed around the end of fiscal pier, directly toward the Naval School building. When within a few hundred yards, the launches opened fire simultaneously with one-pounders at the windows of the Naval Academy. They thus drew the fire of the Mexican forces, along that section of the waterfront, and located their positions for the Florida.

"The Florida opened fire with three-inch battery over the heads of the launches, silencing the fire of the Mexicans in that section of the city. The picket launches in their gallant dash were hit many times with rifle bullets, and three times with one-pounder shells from the Naval Academy. Chief Boat-swall McElroy was wounded in the leg and one was fatally wounded.

"The brigade signal station on top of the Terminal Hotel was exposed to the fire of the Mexicans at all times. The signal squad, under Ensign McDonnell, remained at their posts during the twenty-four hours fighting, and though three of the seven signallers were shot while working messages, communication between brigade headquarters and the Prairie was never interrupted.

"I did not desire to force the fighting through the city, and use the guns of the ship as long as there existed a reasonable chance to avoid this severe measure. Every effort was being made to get into communication with the Mexican authorities, both direct and through the American consul, and to represent to them the futility of further resistance on their part, and the serious consequences that would ensue. My chief of staff, Captain Huse, in connection with the American consul, Mr. Canada, endeavored until 5 o'clock to get into communication with any authorities in control, but their efforts were unavailing.

"The day would have brought the fighting into the most densely populated part of the city after nightfall. It was, therefore, decided to hold our present position, and, in case of unforeseen contingencies, the heavy warehouses on Pier No. 4 could be securely held.

"At 5 P. M. an officer was again sent to Fort San Juan d'Ulloa to inform the commanding officer that the night must be no sign of military movement in the fort during the night, and that no one would be allowed to leave the fort. The commanding officer agreed to this arrangement, and promised to remain neutral.

"A Mexican naval officer from the naval station in Ulloa came on board the Prairie about 5 P. M. He had served in the Spanish navy and was a native of San Juan d'Ulloa. He requested the name of the commanding officer at about 200 navy-yard workmen and sailors be allowed to leave the station and join the forces under General Mass. The practical difficulty of allowing this was pointed out to him, and he was told to inform the commanding officer that the matter would be taken up as soon as order was re-established in the city.

**ENTRANCE OF HARBOR**

**IS SWEPT FOR MINES**

"The Florida was ordered to sweep the entrance of the harbor inside breakwater for mines with wires reeled from the ship, and before the dragging was completed the San Francisco and Chester entered the harbor during the night. Investigation and aeroplane observations subsequently indicated that there were no mines in the harbor.

"At 7 P. M. the following radio was sent to flag officer of the Arkansas:

"Will hold pier No. 4 for the night. Desultory firing continues. You should be prepared to meet any battalions and artillery immediately on arrival under cover of darkness. Captain Huse or myself will repair on board on your arrival to advise you of the situation.

(Signed) FLETCHER.

"Desultory firing continues until midnight, with occasional shots throughout the night. The dead and wounded were sent aboard the Prairie, and the bodies of officers of the Chester and Essex came aboard and offered their services, which were gratefully accepted.

"Reports were received that the enemy were preparing to attack with artillery during the night, and the Utah and Florida anchored outside the breakwater, were directed to be prepared to use turret guns and searchlights if ordered. The Prairie kept searchlights trained to pier along shore from which sniping had occurred during the day.

"At 9 P. M. the San Francisco entered the harbor and anchored 300 yards north of the Prairie. She immediately landed her battalion of two seamen companies, which reported to the brigade commander on shore. The Chester entered the harbor at 12:05 A. M. April 22, and anchored off San Juan d'Ulloa. The Utah, Michigan and New Jersey, landed at 4 A. M. under cover of darkness, and promptly moved to their assigned positions joining the organization on shore.

"Early in the morning of the 22d efforts to get in communication with the authorities were renewed. By 5 o'clock it was definitely ascertained that the firing of the enemy was not under organized control, or acting under the direction of competent authority, and the following instructions were issued:

"Brigade Commander, United States Naval Forces, Vera Cruz, Mexico.

Subject: Readvancing and taking possession of the city of Vera Cruz.

"1. All efforts to get in touch with responsible authorities on shore have failed, and efforts have been fruitless to have the authorities stop firing.

"2. I am well informed that the regular troops have withdrawn, and the people now are firing at will.

"3. You will advance in your direction, and suppress this desultory firing, taking possession of the city and restore order, respecting as much as possible the hotels and other places where foreigners are lodged.

"You are cautioned against the possible use by the enemy of machine guns and artillery.

(Signed) F. F. FLETCHER.

"At 8:50 A. M. Rush signalled:

"Advance begun. Please shell military positions.

(Signed) RUSH.

"The marine forces advanced through all streets to the north of Avenida Independencia, where they were met with heavy rifle and machine gun fire from houses, hotels, hospitals, church steeples and military barracks. They advanced slowly—clearing houses and roofs of snipers and entering every house in every block as they advanced.

"The seaman forces advanced to the south along the waterfront, clearing and protecting the high houses and the marines as they advanced south. The advance of the seamen was opposed by a continuous and concealed rifle fire difficult to locate. It came principally from Benito Juarez, started in Plaza Constitution, the naval academy, military barracks and from the roofs and windows of houses in this section of the city along the waterfront.

**ADVANCING AMERICANS**

**MET BY HEAVY RIFLE FIRE**

"The second seaman regiment under Captain Anderson, United States Navy, was marched toward the waterfront and in front of the new market, naval school and artillery barracks. In crossing the open ground between the naval school and Benito Juarez Lighthouse, about 500 yards in width, they were met by a heavy rifle one-pounder, and machine gun fire from the naval school building. This situation looked critical.

"The Chester, Prairie, and San Francisco simultaneously opened fire with three-inch, four-inch and five-inch batteries against the second story of the naval school building. In a short time the upper story was riddled by forty shots and the fire silenced.

"Our forces advanced steadily through the city, entering houses from which they were being fired upon and disarming the occupants. The Chester from a favorable position commanding the city, shelled the enemy out of the harbor, and from the vicinity of the military barracks. By 11 A. M. our forces were in complete possession of all parts of the city and fighting had practically ceased.

"The following signal was sent to the cruisers Chester, Prairie, San Francisco and to brigade headquarters on shore.

"The division commander desires to express his appreciation and admiration for the splendid and efficient work on the naval brigade in the capture of the city of Vera Cruz and the efficient support given them by the cruisers in the harbor reflect a great credit on the accuracy of fire of their gunners.

(Signed) FLETCHER.

"The Atlantic fleet, under command of Rear-Admiral Badger, approached the harbor of Vera Cruz on the night of the 21st at full speed, all ready to land and come to anchor in the outer harbor several hours ahead of the expected time. I am not allowed to commend my superior officer, but I think it only proper to say in this report that Rear-Admiral Badger during the naval operations on shore at Vera Cruz afforded me the most prompt and willing assistance, and my slight request for recommendation or call for aid was in all cases met with immediate compliance; and it is a great pleasure for me to record the thoroughly fine and generous spirit that was shown by him and his staff in their hearty support of the work on shore.

**WORK OF CRUISE**

**IN CAPTURING CITY**

"The Prairie remained moored in the inner harbor, with steam up in position to cover the landing of troops and control the water front in vicinity of the consulate between Pier No. 1 and Sanitary Pier. The 21st of the Prairie had occasion to silence the firing coming from the Naval Academy, the Blackett Building, near-by, from a large alongside custom-house wharf, and from a small frame house, near Sanitary Pier. This was done by a few well-trained shots from the 3-inch guns and a Colt's automatic, which rattled the frame structure.

"At 8 P. M. the San Francisco was directed by radio to enter the inner harbor, and was warned against rifle fire from the breakwater at the entrance and alongshore. She came in at 9 P. M. without pilot or the assistance of navigational lights, anchored near the Prairie and shifted berth to the moorings assigned, receiving a signal.

"The Chester arrived from Tampico at midnight, the 21st. She entered the harbor with all lights screened and ready for action, with marines stationed along deck for rifle fire. She promptly took up moorings in assigned position off Sanitary Pier and was signalled, 'Well done.' Both commanding officers reported on board the Prairie received instructions as to disposition of forces and general instructions relative to guarding their ships. It was not desired to cause any more destruction of property than was necessary to protect our men ashore, and

buildings were to be fired upon only when it was ascertained that they were being used by the Mexicans as defensive positions from which they directed fire upon our troops. This plan was most effectively and efficiently carried out by the commanding officers of all three ships, and not a building was fired into unnecessarily.

"The Chester was moored inshore nearest to the firing, and at daybreak rifle fire was directed from main turrets and large near No. 3 breakwater. This was returned with rifle fire, but had to be silenced by a three-inch gun. Later firing from a number of points in this section of the city was located, and both three-inch and five-inch guns of the Chester had to be used to silence it.

"Soon after the final advance of the landing forces into the city, which commenced about 8:30 A. M. of the 22d, the Second Regiment, consisting of the battalions of the New Hampshire, South Carolina, Vermont and New Jersey, marched across the open space between the high houses and the Naval Academy, passing to the southward. When our men met with a heavy fire most of the day dropped on the ground or against lower walls of the Naval School and instantly the Chester, Prairie and San Francisco opened fire. The firing was very accurate, directly over the heads of our men, and in a short space of time the whole second story of this building, about 500 feet front, was a wreck, the most of the firing and the work of these three vessels, Chester, Commander Moffett, Prairie, Commander Harrison, and San Francisco, Commander Anderson, supporting our troops on shore was most effective and deserving special praise. Initiative and clear judgment were required on the part of the commanding officers, and the results showed in a striking manner the efficiency of the ships under their commands.

"The Chester, being in the most forward position, did most of the firing, and received a greater number of hits. The San Francisco and Prairie were hit by rifle fire many times over 100 shots hit the Chester. Two men on the Chester and one on the Prairie were wounded.

"The Esperanza, in charge of Lieutenant Fletcher, lying between the Chester and the Prairie, was struck thirty-one times, and one man of the Chester was slightly wounded. All refugees were placed in a position of safety, and none were injured.

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**"POSTER STAMPS" NOW**

**LONDON BUSINESS FAD**

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The poster stamp is about four times the size of an ordinary postage stamp, and has a gummed back and perforated edges. It is printed in colors.

The actual salaries they receive from the clubs to which they are attached are in nearly every case merely nominal; but in the case of popular favorites, who are playing exhibition games three or four times a week, occasionally winning such competitions, there are "extras" which bring up the total income from all sources to five figures.

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